

Remarks/Arguments

Reconsideration of the above-identified application in view of the present amendment is respectfully requested. By the present amendment, claims 1-15 have been amended. New claims 16-18 have been added.

Information Disclosure Statement

The Examiner indicated that the foreign references cited in the Information Disclosure Statement submitted September 6, 2007 have not been considered because a proper 1449 Form was not provided. A proper 1449 Form is accompanied herewith listing these foreign references and, thus, the Applicants respectfully request the Examiner consider these references.

Oath/Declaration

The Oath/Declaration was deemed defective for not identifying the citizenship of each inventor in a discernible manner. A new Oath/Declaration is accompanied herewith that clearly provides the citizenship of the inventor and, thus, it is believed that the current Oath/Declaration is in compliance with 37 CFR §1.67(a).

Specification

The specification was objected to for not providing appropriate section headings. The specification has been amended to provide section headings and, thus, it is believed that the objection has been overcome.

Claim Objections

Claims 1-15 were objected to because of informalities. The claims have been amended to correct these informalities and, thus, it is believed that the objection has been overcome.

Claim Rejections under 35 U. S. C. §112

Claims 1-15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. In particular, claim 1 was rejected because reference characters 26 and 27 were used to designate different sets of latching structure. Claim 1 has been amended to differentiate the latching structure 16, 17 on the coupling part and the latching structure 26, 27 on the locking part. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of claim 1 has been overcome.

Claim 2 was rejected because the releasing structure lacked antecedent basis. Claim 2 has been amended to more clearly define the releasing structure and, thus, it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of claim 2 has been overcome.

Claim 3 was rejected reference characters 16, 17, 18, 19, 26, and 27 were each used to designate multiple elements. Claim 3 has been amended to more clearly define what structure the Applicants are referring to and, thus, it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of claim 3 has been overcome. For these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the rejection of claims 1-15 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, has been overcome.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1-15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,423,892 to Bartholomew (hereafter "Bartholomew"). It is respectfully submitted that amended claim 1 is patentable over Bartholomew and is therefore allowable.

Amended claim 1 recites a coupling including a coupling part and a locking

part mounted in movable fashion on the coupling part. The locking part has two side sections, each having a longitudinal detent element on the inside facing the coupling part and latching structure at the free ends of the side sections. The coupling part includes guide recesses that lie opposite each other and into which the detent elements engage. The coupling part has at one end of the guide recesses latching structure that is configured to be complementary to the latching structure on the side sections.

Bartholomew does not teach or suggest this structure. The Examiner asserts that the legs 160 of the wedge shaped member 156 constitute the locking member of the present invention and the housing 180 constitutes detent elements on the locking member (Office Action pages 4-5). These features, however, are from two completely different embodiments of the connector assembly in Bartholomew, namely the fifth embodiment of Fig. 10 and the sixth embodiment of Figs. 11-12. There is no teaching or suggestion that these features in Bartholomew are used in combination with one another in a single device.

In particular, Bartholomew does not teach or suggest a locking part that 1) is mounted in a movable fashion on a coupling part and 2) includes inwardly facing detent elements. The wedge members 154 and 156 in Fig. 10 are adjustable relative to one another and the conduit 152 but do not include inwardly facing detents. The housing 180 in Fig. 11 includes inwardly facing flanges 190 but, once the flanges engage the retaining element 176, the housing cannot move.

Accordingly, no embodiment in Bartholomew includes structure that includes both of these features.

Regardless, Bartholomew does not teach or suggest a coupling part that has 1) guide recesses that lie opposite each other and engage detent elements on a locking part, and 2) latching structure at one end of the guide recess that is complementary to latching structure on the locking part. The Examiner asserts that the recessed ring 206 on the retaining element 176 constitutes a guide recess. The ring 206, however, is clearly the only portion of the retaining element 176 constructed to engage the housing. In other words, the retaining element 176 does not include recesses for engaging the projections 190 on the housing 180 and additional structure configured complementary to other structure on the housing. For these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that amended claim 1 is patentable over Bartholomew and is therefore allowable.

Amended claim 2 recites that at the other end of the guide recess the coupling part includes releasing structure that is configured in accordance with the latching structure on the latching part. As noted, the retaining element 176 only engages with the housing 180 at the projections 190 - there is no additional structure provided on the retaining element configured in accordance with structure on the housing. For these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that amended claim 2 is patentable over Bartholomew and is therefore allowable.

Claims 3-15 depend from claim 1 and are allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 1 and for the specific limitations recited therein.

New Claims

Claim 16 recites that the coupling part includes sliding surfaces extending substantially parallel to both sides of the guide recesses, the latching structure on the locking part being configured to slide along the sliding surfaces. Claim 17 recites that the sliding surfaces include the latching structure at one end and the releasing structure at the other end. Claim 18 recites that the locking part is slidable along the sliding surfaces from a first position in which the latching structure engages the latching structure on the coupling part to lock the counterpart and the coupling part to a second position in which the latching structure engages the releasing structure on the coupling part to allow movement between the counterpart and the coupling part. It is respectfully submitted that the art of record does not teach or suggest the structure recited in claims 16-18 and, thus, claims 16-18 are patentable over the art of record and are therefore allowable.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the present amendment places the application in condition for allowance and allowance of the application is respectfully requested.

Please charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment in the fees for this amendment to our Deposit Account No. 20-0090.

Respectfully submitted,

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